



Urgent: Southern Pine Beetle Wrap-Up

By John J. Riggins, Forest Entomologist.

The southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*, Fig. 1) continues to have increased impacts on Mississippi forests during the summer and fall of 2012. During late May and throughout June, foresters on the Homochitto National Forest in Southwest Mississippi began reporting a growing number of active SPB spots. During an initial survey flight during early June, more than 80 spots were detected. Most of these spots were on Forest Service land, but a few were on private lands. The Mississippi Forestry Commission is working closely with the U.S.D.A. Forest Service to identify and notify landowners affected by this apparent SPB outbreak. Another detection flight during late June/early July indicated at least 175 new SPB spots in and around the Homochitto at that time. An aerial detection flight in early August reported over 200 more SPB spots, bringing the total number of infestations in and around the Homochitto to over 500. An aerial detection flight in late August detected another 113 spots, bringing the grand total just before Hurricane Isaac to 624 spots. Hurricane Isaac caused substantial downed timber, flooding, and interrupted SPB



Figure 1: The southern pine beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*) is historically the most destructive forest insect pest of Southeastern forests.

salvage operations as it moved through the area, but the District Forest Office was not directly damaged and work should resume quickly. There is no way to know what the effects of the hurricane might be on the SPB outbreak. One flight in late August, two more flights in September and another flight in mid-October detected approximately 352 more spots, bringing the total number of SPB spots detected during 2012 to approximately just below 1000.

Many of these SPB spots fizzled out on their own, and no control measures were needed. All of the spots that were classified as actively growing

have been suppressed through cut and leave tactics (Fig. 2). It is now winter, and the SPB are mostly dormant, however any residual beetles tucked safely away inside trees on the Homochitto will bide their time and wait for warmer weather this spring.

The danger for the outbreak to continue during 2013 is high in the areas surrounding the Homochitto National Forest. Landowners in Franklin, Amite, Wilkinson, Adams, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Copiah Counties are urged to be diligent and conduct inspections of their lands to determine if SPB activity is present. This [publication](#)



Figure 2: Cut and leave operation on Homochitto National Forest in August 2012.

(<http://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/CAT87208970/PDF>) provides a good overview of SPB signs and symptoms. If any SPB activity is suspected, please contact your local MFC office. Timely salvage or cut and leave operations can dramatically limit total timber losses incurred due to a SPB outbreak, and can limit a landowners liability should the infestation spread to adjacent properties.

Landowners in the rest of the state are also encouraged to pay close attention for SPB activity. No other major outbreaks are known of or anticipated for the rest of the State at this time, although less than 50 small SPB spots have been reported on Tombigbee National Forest near Houston, MS. Anecdotally, I have noticed relatively high numbers of both SPB and clerid beetles around

Starkville while doing some trapping for research during early November. Forest stakeholders throughout Mississippi should keep a close eye on things as during the coming spring.

For additional information contact:

Mississippi Forestry Commission [Local Office](#)
or
John J. Riggins, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Forest Entomology
Box 9775
Mississippi State, MS 39762
johnjriggins@gmail.com
Phone: 662-325-2984



Figure3: SPB attack densities are very high in some spots, as evidenced by pitch tubes on this tree in Homochitto National Forest on 7/31/2012. Photo

